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Cooperation between the United Nations and the Economic Cooperation Organization

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Report of the Secretary-General

I. Background

1. This report is submitted in accordance with General Assembly resolution 53/15 of 29 October 1998, which requested the Secretary-General to submit a progress report on cooperation between the United Nations and the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) to the fifty-fourth session of the Assembly. The present report provides a brief resume of the status of the cooperative relationship between ECO and various United Nations agencies during 1998 and 1999.

II. United Nations Development Programme

2. One of the more important developments, which was also related to a great extent to increasing the efficiency of the ECO secretariat, was the formalization of an agreement between ECO and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in October 1998 under a project entitled "Capacity-building of the ECO secretariat". The project is presently being implemented in phases, in close collaboration with UNDP, and is expected to provide the ECO secretariat with consultancy services, technical assistance — including training and access to modern information technology — and adequate office equipment.

3. The Economic Cooperation Organization also participated in the UNDP/Group of 77-sponsored High-level Conference on Regional and Subregional Economic Cooperation, held in Bali, Indonesia, from 2 to 5 December 1998. The contributions made by the ECO Secretary-General in panel I and II discussions were well appreciated and were subsequently reflected in the records of the Conference.

III. United Nations Conference on Trade and Development

4. Two joint ECO/United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) study missions were conducted in the Central Asian States and Azerbaijan in March and May 1998 in order to boost the customs and trade-facilitation endeavours of those countries.

5. A draft memorandum of understanding was forwarded to the UNCTAD headquarters in Geneva in December 1998 to formalize the already existing cooperative relationship between the two organizations. UNCTAD headquarters have now endorsed the ECO proposed draft of the memorandum, which is expected to be concluded in the near future.

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6. A delegation from the ECO secretariat, comprising the Deputy Secretary-General and the Director of Trade, held meetings at UNCTAD headquarters in the first week of June 1999 in connection with follow-up to the trade efficiency action programme.

IV. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations/International Fund for Agricultural Development/World Food Programme

7. The Secretary-General of ECO visited the headquarters of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in Rome in September 1998 and met with the Director-General of FAO to explore ways and means of bringing about a fruitful collaboration between the two organizations. During the visit, the Secretary-General also met with the President of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the Executive Director of the World Food Programme (WFP) to explore avenues of cooperation with these two organizations.

V. United Nations Population Fund

8. A joint ECO/United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) conference on "Male involvement in reproduction, health and family planning" was held in Baku in September 1998. This was the fourth event held in collaboration with UNFPA. Another joint ECO-UNFPA workshop, on expanding contraceptive choice and improving the quality of reproductive health programmes, to be held in Ankara in November 1999, is proposed.

VI. United Nations International Drug Control Programme

9. The ECO/United Nations International Drug Control Programme (UNDCP) project on establishing a drug control coordination unit in the ECO secretariat, which is a key element of the ECO Plan of Action on Drug Control, is now being implemented. Following a visit by a UNDCP consultant to the ECO secretariat in July 1999, the project became operational, with effect from 25 July 1999.

10. A joint ECO-UNDCP legal training workshop on ECO regional judicial cooperation in handling drug and money-laundering cases was held at the ECO secretariat from 1 to 5 March 1999. The workshop adopted a set of useful recommendations for curbing drug abuse and money-laundering in the ECO region.

VII. Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

11. The Economic Cooperation Organization participated in the fourth Consultative Meeting among Executive Heads of Subregional Organizations and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), held at Kathmandu in October 1998. The meeting expressed satisfaction at the enhanced pace of intra-regional cooperation in key areas such as sharing experiences in trade liberalization, promotion of investment, development of infrastructure, poverty eradication and human resource development.

12. Delegations from ECO also participated in other meetings of the Commission, such as the third meeting of the Regional Inter-agency Committee for Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific, held in Bangkok on 17 November 1998, the meeting of the Committee on Transport, Communications, Tourism and Infrastructure Development, held in Bangkok from 18 to 20 November 1998, and the meeting of the Committee on Statistics, held in Bangkok from 24 to 26 November 1998.

13. An inter-agency session on a joint ECO/ESCAP/UNCTAD/Islamic Development Bank (IDB) project on multimodal transport operations in the ECO region was held in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, in February 1999. The meeting reviewed the three-component project in detail, with a view to giving priority to the multimodal transport study. A technical assistance grant agreement, worth US$ 272,000, is expected to be signed between ECO and IDB in September 1999, following which the project with begin operations.

14. A joint ECO/ESCAP/IDB seminar on trade and investment information networking in the south-western subregion was held at the ECO secretariat in February 1999. The materials of the seminar have been published under the ESCAP series *Studies in Trade and Investment* (volume 35).

15. Following the seminar, the Commission will collaborate with ECO in developing an ECO business guide, as well as in establishing ECONET, an electronic communications link with ECO member States, which will serve as a vehicle for improving commercial information.

VIII. World Trade Organization

16. Another recent Development is the acquisition by ECO of observer status in the Trade and Development Committee of the World Trade Organization (WTO). ECO has also applied for observer status, which it expects to receive in the near future, in the WTO Committee on Regional Trade Agreements and the WTO General Council.

17. ECO has also been invited to the WTO Ministerial Committee Meeting, to be held in Seattle, United States of America, in November 1999.